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SUBJECT: Lebanon: Media Reaction - May 19, 2009

Atmospherics:

Despite the Lebanese media's preoccupation with the elections, the meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu was a front page story in all newspapers. The media seemed sympathetic to the American President "who has a vision" and wants to reach a "two-state solution" as soon as possible. Newspapers focused on the contradiction between the two leaders. An editorialist expressed the belief that President Obama will do everything he can to "keep the Israeli beat under control."

Selected Headlines

"Obama and Netanyahu Collided With the Two-States Solution"
Moderate, anti-Syrian An-Nahar

"Obama Presses Netanyahu on Two-State Solution" English-language
Beirut-based The Daily Star

Block Quotes:

"Obama and Netanyahu: Which Formula Will Win?" an editorial by Aouni Al-Ka'aki in pro-Hariri Ash-Sharq (5/19):

"The meeting between...Obama and Netanyahu is very important because its...impact will determine the future, particularly the future of the peace process in the region. ...Both leaders' statements showed contradictions in their visions: Obama believes in the two-state solution while Netanyahu seems to have an indecisive plan and obviously rejects Obama's vision. ...During President Clinton's tenure, there were also contradictions between the United States and Israel. At that point in time, Netanyahu was decisive about refusing the American plans and was able to obstruct them. ...Now, the circumstances are different and Netanyahu might not be able to obstruct President Obama's vision and plans. This was obvious because following his meeting with Obama, his statements seemed ambiguous and not clear. He said that he has a plan but did not explain it. In fact, the Israelis are in dire need of historic leadership. Neither Netanyahu nor Olmert are historic leaders ...Perhaps the American President will not be able to impose his vision on the Israelis, ...however, it is believed that the Americans will do everything they can to keep the Israeli beat under control. ...This may take a long time, though, and time is not in any party's interests."

Sison